

**Testimony on Care4Kids
Appropriations Committee
February 21, 2017**

Members of the General Assembly:

My name is Ruben Mallma, and I am a Home Child Care Provider in New Haven, licensed by the state since 2006. I believe I am one of the first men to get a family child care license in Connecticut. I started working in the field of child care in 2002, when my partner Luz Serna decided to open her own child care business called Saint Martin of Porres Home Daycare LLC. I am a co-owner, and I was convinced to help Luz as an assistant and later as a substitute, leaving my previous work as an associate salesman at a well-known building materials store.

Over time, this new experience of caring for children became more than a job, it became a passion. I wanted to develop professionally so that I could offer children and their families better education and development in this crucial stage of their lives. For this reason, I took Early Education courses at a high school and earned my Child Development Associate certification. I am ready to get my Associate's Degree in Early Childhood.

Both my partner and I have become mentors of potential child care providers, and we help our assistants and our neighbors become licensed providers and open their own child care businesses. Currently, we are located on the same street as four other family home daycares. The social impact of this is positive for the neighborhood, which has become a peaceful and safe place compared to in the past when there were high crime rates.

We prepare children academically using a curriculum that we pay for. One of our primary goals is for children to complete this pre-school stage with all the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in school. We also provide a spacious, welcoming, and safe environment for the children. We have invested a lot of money turning our home into a small school. We work with licensed substitutes to provide the best care.

I currently have 9 children in my program, 8 of whom receive Care4Kids. My partner Luz, has 10 children in her program, 9 of whom receive Care4Kids. If these 17 children were to lose this vital help, we would have to close both child care businesses and look for other work, which would take us away from the profession that we love.

I urge you to please invest in Care4Kids. Otherwise, there will be a negative chain reaction. The Office of Early Childhood recently hired new inspectors with high salaries. But if we close our businesses for lack of children, what will the inspectors do?

It will be devastating for parents, who may have to stop working to take care of their children themselves, becoming unemployed. Poor children will be the most disadvantaged, because their parents do not have the salary to pay for quality care like the care we offer. Please do not jeopardize their future. Invest more money in Care4Kids.

Sincerely,

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